UNITED
NATIONS

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Secretariat

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INFORMATION CIRCULAR

To: Members of the staff

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management

Subject: COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION FOR PROMOTION TO THE PROFESSIONAL CATEGORY OF STAFF MEMBERS FROM OTHER CATEGORIES

1. In accordance with administrative instruction ST/AI/406 of 31 July 1995 and its addendum of 31 October 1995, the following information is provided on the format and procedures for the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category of staff members from other categories to be held from 25 January to 2 February 1996. As noted in that instruction, the following occupational groups have been selected:

(a) Administration, which covers work such as that of administrative officers, personnel officers, budget officers and project management officers;

(b) Electronic data-processing, which covers work such as that of programme analysts, system analysts and programmers;

(c) Finance, which covers work such as that of accountants, auditors and finance officers;

(d) Nursing, which covers work such as that of the head nurse at Headquarters;

(e) Political affairs, which covers work such as that of political affairs officers and liaison officers;

(f) Public information, which covers work such as that of information officers and press officers;

(g) Statistics, which covers work done by statisticians such as research, projections and compiling of data.

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A. Written examination

2. The written examination accounts for 80 per cent of the total number of points available for each occupational group and consists of two parts: a general paper (4 hours) and a specialized paper (4 hours) related to the occupational group concerned. An examination booklet will be distributed to the candidates at the beginning of each part of the written examinations. The examination must be written with dark blue or black pen only in the designated parts of each booklet.

3. The general paper comprises three sections with a total coefficient of 30 per cent:

(a) Section 1 will test candidates' ability to analyse a problem. This section consists of a text and questions based on the text. The time recommended for this section is 1 hour and 20 minutes and it has a coefficient of 10 per cent of the marks assigned to the examination;

(b) Section 2 consists of a text of a speech or a report. Candidates will be asked to summarize the text, reducing it to approximately one third of its length. The summary will be evaluated for comprehension, accuracy and clarity of thought. The time recommended for this section is 1 hour and 20 minutes and it has a coefficient of 10 per cent of the marks assigned to the examination;

(c) Section 3 deals with questions on international relations. Candidates may choose any 10 from the 12 questions offered. The time recommended for this section is 1 hour and 20 minutes and it has a coefficient of 10 per cent of the marks assigned to the examination.

4. The specialized paper, which tests substantive knowledge of the occupational group concerned, normally consists of 3 essay-type exercises and 10 short-answer-type questions. All essays and questions are mandatory. The total time recommended for this part is 4 hours and it has a coefficient of 50 per cent of the marks assigned to the examination.

5. As stated in paragraph 24 of administrative instruction ST/AI/406, candidates participating in the examination shall be permitted to take the examination in any of the working languages of the regional commissions, with due regard to the requirement of proficiency in one of the working languages of the Secretariat. In order to demonstrate such proficiency, all candidates will have to take section 2 (drafting test) in either English or French. Alternatively, candidates may elect to take the entire written examination (parts 1 and 2) in a working language of a commission other than English or French and sit for a special language test in either English or French. This test consists of two parts covering, respectively, reading and writing abilities. The duration of the test is 2 hours and 30 minutes. Candidates who have not demonstrated proficiency in one of the working languages of the Secretariat (English or French) in the special language test or in the drafting test will be considered as not having met the standard required in the examination.

6. The exact time of the examinations will be adjusted for each examination centre, taking into account the various time zones, and will be communicated to each candidate. Candidates should arrive at the examination room in each centre at least half an hour in advance of the scheduled starting time and have with them a United Nations identification document, their convocation letter and pens.

7. The written examinations will be held at the designated examination centres for the occupational groups mentioned in paragraph 1. The tentative schedule is as follows:

General paper	31 January 1996
Administration	30 January 1996
Electronic data-processing	25 January 1996
Finance	2 February 1996
Nursing	1 February 1996
Political affairs	1 February 1996
Public information	29 January 1996
Statistics	26 January 1996
Special language test	To be announced

The final schedule will be reflected in the convocation letters that will be sent to each candidate.

B. Oral examination

8. Candidates may be convoked for an oral examination in accordance with paragraph 14 (b) of administrative instruction ST/AI/406. Candidates serving at duty stations away from Headquarters will take this part of the examination either in New York or at another location, depending on circumstances. At locations away from Headquarters, the oral examination will be conducted by a board consisting of at least three members of the relevant board of examiners, including an ex officio member.

9. The oral examination is scheduled to be held in April-May 1996.

10. Candidates will take the oral examination either in English or French, the working languages of the Secretariat, in accordance with the preference stated in their original application. The oral examination accounts for 20 per cent of the total number of points available.

11. For all occupational groups, the standardized format of the oral examination will include a 5- to 10-minute presentation of a general nature on a topic broadly related to the occupational group concerned. Each candidate will draw two topics at random from a selection prepared in advance and choose one of the topics. The candidate will then have 15 minutes to prepare an oral presentation on the selected topic. Following the presentation, the Board of Examiners will have an opportunity to ask three questions for clarification or amplification of any of the points made by the candidate. After the presentation and related questions, the Board will ask seven other questions of a general nature also broadly related to the occupation.

12. The presentation and responses to the questions of the oral examination will be evaluated in accordance with a rating scale designed to assess the candidate's ability to comprehend topics and questions, to communicate with others and to present and illustrate with examples his or her views in a clear, logical and understandable way. In order to ensure consistency, the marking will be done separately by each member of the Board immediately after each oral examination and without relation to the grading of the written examination. For all occupational groups, the presentation will account for 45 per cent of the points assigned to the oral examination, the answers to the requests for clarification or amplification for 15 per cent and the answers to the 7 other questions for 40 per cent.